



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**

Principal Lawyer

Job Details

Job title: Principal Lawyer (Postcode NRTNJC0945)

Grade: PS10

Reports to: Head of Legal

Directorate and Service area: Law and Governance, Legal Services

Purpose of Job

Governance is at the heart of everything we do, first and foremost we are part of a legal team working in local government. This role is expected to:

Lead and manage a specialist legal function, providing high-quality, timely and legally robust advice and representation. Act as lead legal adviser on complex, high-risk and high-profile matters, ensuring legal risk is identified, mitigated and communicated. Manage staff, resources and legal risk to support the Council's statutory responsibilities and strategic objectives.

Key Responsibilities:

Leadership and Service Delivery

- Lead the legal service area, ensuring delivery of high-quality and timely legal advice and representation.
- Ensure effective resource management, service planning and compliance with professional standards.

Complex Legal Advice and Risk Management

- Act as lead adviser for complex, high-risk and politically sensitive matters with the requirement to brief elected Members and other stakeholders as appropriate.
- Identify, explain and mitigate legal, financial and reputational risks. This will include from time to time advising on communication strategies.
- Oversee litigation, statutory compliance and risk registers.
- Escalate high-profile or politically sensitive matters appropriately.

Staff Management and Development

- Manage, supervise and develop a team of lawyers (with Senior Lawyer support).
- Direct work allocation and undertake performance management, appraisals and coaching to empower and promote a culture of autonomy
- To adopt a multi-service approach in providing advice across multiple areas of law to services within the organisation to deliver efficient, timely and high quality legal advice. To demonstrate leadership and high professional standards in the delivery of work of the whole of the service.

Advocacy, Representation and External Legal Management

- Represent the Council in legal proceedings, negotiations, hearings and inquiries.
- Instruct, manage and monitor external solicitors and Counsel.

Governance, Corporate Advice and Policy Development

- Advise on strategies, reports, contracts and projects to ensure legality and good administrative practice.
- Contribute to corporate governance and policy development.

Financial Responsibility

- Be accountable for expenditure and income generation within the service area.
- Ensure value for money in external legal services.
- Identify opportunities to support financial sustainability of the service.

General Responsibilities applicable to all Jobs

1. Demonstrate awareness/understanding of equal opportunities and other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs.
2. Comply with the Council's policies and procedures including (but not limited to) safeguarding, financial regulations, promotion of equalities, customer care, agreed audit actions and health and safety (ensuring that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons).
3. Carry out any other duties which fall within the broad spirit, scope and purpose of this job description and which are commensurate with the grade of the post.

This job description reflects the major tasks to be carried out by the post holder and identifies a level of responsibility at which they will be required to work. In the interests of effective working, the major tasks may be reviewed from time to time to reflect changing needs and circumstances. Such reviews and any consequential changes will be carried out in consultation with the post holder.

Person Specification –

| Attributes | Essential Criteria | Desirable Criteria |
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| Education, Qualifications and Training | Qualified Solicitor, Barrister or FCILEx Evidence of continuing professional development. | Additional specialist legal training or accreditation such as higher rights of audience Leadership or management qualifications. |
| Experience and Knowledge | Extensive experience in a relevant specialist area. Experience managing complex, high-risk and high-profile legal matters. Experience managing staff and leading legal teams of multiple legal disciplines/specialisms. Experience in local government or wider public sector including strong knowledge of local government law, governance, the Constitution and decision-making processes. | Experience in local government or wider public sector. Knowledge of administrative systems and case management tools. |

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| <p>Ability and Skills</p> | <p>Strong analytical and judgement skills, including balancing political, legal and operational considerations.</p> <p>To ensure up to date research for sector reforms both internal and external for client departments to act as a legal business partner to ensure compliance and sustainable service delivery.</p> <p>Clear, proportionate and solution-focused legal advice.</p> <p>Excellent drafting, advocacy, negotiation and communication skills.</p> <p>Strong interpersonal and team-working skills including cross team working and collaboration across the legal team to ensure streamlined and effective legal advice and processes.</p> <p>Design legal processes, templates and workflow improvements to ensure an efficient delivery of high quality legal services and display leadership in the implementation of these.</p> <p>Ability to lead, motivate and develop teams effectively.</p> | <p>Extensive experience of support service planning and improvement to implementation.</p> |
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| Equal Opportunities | Ability to demonstrate awareness /understanding of equal opportunities and other people's behaviour, physical, social and welfare needs. | |
| Additional Factors | <p>Promote and display the Council's values of being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer-focused• Respectful• Efficient• Supportive• Trustworthy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to handle sensitive and distressing case material. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to travel for work purposes. | |